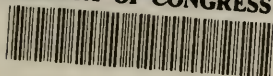


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SPEECH

OF

MR. G. P. MARSH, OF VERMONT,

ON

THE MEXICAN WAR,

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE U. S.,

FEBRUARY 10, 1848.



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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR

WASHINGTON, D. C.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR

WASHINGTON, D. C.

1917

SPEECH.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union, and having under consideration the bill authorizing a loan not exceeding \$18,500,000,

Mr. MARSH, of Vermont, said—

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

I propose to avail myself of this occasion, to do what I have not yet done in this place—to express, namely, in the fewest possible words, my own opinion, and, as I suppose, that of a large majority of my constituents, respecting the causes, character, objects, and tendencies of the war in which we are engaged, and to assign the reasons which will compel me to vote against all measures designed for the prosecution of hostilities professedly commenced for defence, but which have been, and are, waged for purposes of aggression, invasion, and conquest.

It is said that it is too late to investigate the causes of the war, and that the only remaining question proper for the consideration of Congress is, what measures will tend to bring it to the most speedy termination, and enable us to conclude a peace upon terms most advantageous to ourselves. This would, indeed, be so, if it were true that a state of war, however commenced, absolved us from all duties towards those of our fellow men who have become our enemies. But there are those, and I profess myself of the number, who can discern no sound distinction between the principles of public and private morality, and who believe that war, like private violence, can lawfully be resorted to only as a necessary means of securing already existing rights, not of creating new and independent claims. It becomes, therefore, material to ascertain the origin, causes, and purposes of every war, before it is possible to determine when its lawful ends have been accomplished, and what measure of reparation the victorious party is entitled to exact.

In inquiring into the origin of the present war, it is essential to distinguish between its primary causes and its proximate occasions. That its first cause was the annexation of Texas, no man disputes; and there is as little doubt that its immediate occasion was the occupation of the left bank of the Rio Grande by the army of the United States, in obedience to the order of the President. The war is the natural and legitimate consequence of annexation; but, though a natural and legitimate, it does not follow that it was a *necessary*, result of that measure, and therefore this Administration may be chargeable with its guilt, although the original offence was committed before the present Executive came into power. If the Administration knowingly omitted any proper means to avert, or voluntarily adopted any measure calculated to precipitate, so dire a calamity, if it refuses to accept the terms which are believed to be now offered by prostrate and suppliant Mexico, it is responsible, before God and man, for all the consequences of its acts or its neglects. I shall not venture to affirm that, after the mortal wound which we had inflicted upon the honor and the interests of Mexico, by our rapacious absorption of a territory once indisputably hers, and to which she still laid claim, it was possible to avoid a war; but as no effort was ever made in good faith to propitiate that republic—a point most conclusively established by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. DIXON)—we are not entitled to presume that she would have turned a deaf ear to honorable proposals of peace; and inasmuch as Mexico had committed no hostile act, the *casus belli* cannot be considered as having occurred until the President forcibly occupied a territory not only claimed, but quietly possessed by her—

a territory to which, as the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. THOMPSON) has, in his admirable speech, indisputably proved, Texas had not the shadow of title—a territory which the Senate of the United States had virtually adjudged to be still part and parcel of the Mexican domain. The war, therefore, was not only provoked, but commenced by us; and though I will not say that the Administration wantonly plunged into it, with a full apprehension of its arduous character, its countless cost of treasure and of blood, yet I have no hesitation in professing my deliberate conviction that the Executive ordered the army to advance upon the Rio Grande under, not the belief only, but the hope, that this insult would goad Mexico to some hostile demonstration, which might furnish a plausible reason for a great increase of our military establishment, and, consequently, of Executive patronage, and, at the same time, enable the Administration, at the cheap cost of “a small war,” to extort from humbled Mexico the cession of her fairest provinces, and thus place Mr. Polk by the side of his predecessor, on that bad eminence which John Tyler now occupies, solitary and alone, as the great enlarger of the “area of freedom.” There was, moreover, a special motive for taking steps to secure the acquisition of a part, at least, of California. The surrender of our claims to northern Oregon had been predetermined. It was foreseen that this sacrifice of Western interests, this mortification of Western pride, would excite a feeling of indignation which must be appeased, and nothing seemed more likely to accomplish this end than a war with Mexico, which would furnish congenial occupation to the restless and adventurous spirits of the Mississippi valley, divert public attention from the unpopular policy of the Administration in respect to Oregon, and atone for the loss of the northern portion of that territory by new acquisitions on its southern border.

Entertaining these views upon the origin and purposes of the war, I can consider it in no other light than as a national crime; but, independently of this, it is an offence against the moral spirit of our time, a retrograde step in the movement of humanity, a violent wresting of our national energies and national resources to unnatural, inappropriate, and mischievous uses. The creative arts of peace, the arts of production, multiplication, and conversion, are now universally recognised as the objects on which the physical powers of man should be mainly exerted; they are arts eminently suited to the character and wants of our people, and the genius of our institutions, and it is a complete inversion of the principles of true statesmanship in the nineteenth century, as well as a violation of the rules of Christianity, to call upon our countrymen to turn the ploughshare into the sword. We are suited to grow by development and assimilation, rather than by sudden accretion; by gradual extension, than by rapid acquisition; by honorable and well-earned gain, than by rapacious appropriation. The very publicity inseparable from all the operations of our Government is fatal to the successive conduct of aggressive war, which, like most other crimes, must be planned, if not perpetrated, in darkness. But it is not, perhaps, surprising that the party which aims to break down the industrial establishments of the country, and smother those peaceful arts which have hitherto so largely contributed to its moral and physical prosperity, should seek to withdraw attention from the pernicious tendencies of its general policy, to gild political demoralization and financial quackery with the splendor of foreign conquest, and to furnish new, though guilty, occupation to hands which are destined no longer to find employment in the quiet pursuits of civil life.

A great effort is made to hide from us the enormity of this war, and to reconcile our consciences to its turpitude, by exaggerated pictures of the wrongs we have sustained at the hands of Mexico; of the glory which the prowess of our troops will reflect on our national character; of the advantages which we

are to reap from a few successful campaigns. The South is told that, by the acquisition of new territory, we shall obtain room for that extension of slavery, which is alleged to be essential to the permanence of the system, the continued political ascendancy of the South, and the future security of the slaveholder, and shall thereby disappoint the delusive hope with which Mr. Walker's famous letter cozened the Democracy of the North into the support of annexation, as a measure favorable to the ultimate extinction of slavery; the North is encouraged to hope that, by force of the Wilmot proviso, engrafted on some war bill, or treaty of peace, the further spread of slavery will be prevented, and thus the vaunted extension of the area of freedom will at length come to be no longer an impudent mockery; and they who have clothed two nations in scarlet and in sackcloth, and kindled the fires of hell in ten times ten thousand hearts, will blind us to all this misery, all this guilt, with the dazzling lustre of the "brightest jewel of the diadem of commerce," the trade of the east, which the balmy gales of the Pacific are to waft to our future commercial marts in the secure havens of California, in galleons more richly freighted than the half-forgotten prizes of Drake and Anson.

I am not an apologist for Mexico; still less an admirer of her polity or her institutions. No man can be better persuaded that she has done us great wrongs—wronges for which we might lawfully have exacted atonement, had they not been provoked by our injurious treatment of her; no man can hope less from the future prospects, or the future disposition of a country cursed with the two worst possible forms of misrule—the tyranny of the soldier and the tyranny of the priest. The people of Mexico are, technically, the enemies of my country. I wish them no triumphs over our diplomacy, no trophies over our arms; but I have no sympathy with that mistaken spirit of revenge, which glories in visiting the errors of rulers on their ignorant and unoffending subjects; none with that infernal passion which gloats upon the corpses of the slaughtered Indians—the forced recruits, that constitute so large a proportion of the Mexican armies; none with that hell-born ambition, with

"Eye that scorseth all it glares upon;"

which scorns the victories of peace, and vouchsafes the chaplet to none but the minister of misery and death. I have no desire that a single Mexican wife should be made a widow, a single Mexican child an orphan; and I would rather that my country should sit down in honest shame, than purchase, at the price of rapine and tears and blood, the "unjust glory" of waving her flag over all the wide continent that stretches between the stormy Atlantic and the shores of the Tranquil Sea.

"One murder makes a villain, thousands a hero."

But the cold-blooded politician, who, safe in his cabinet, provokes hostilities for the sake of the patronage that war may give him—the ambitious statesman, who wages a war of conquest for the extension of his country's territory, or the glory of his own Administration—the hot-headed ruler, who bathes a continent in blood to avenge a fancied insult, or a breach of diplomatic etiquette—these are wholesale manslayers, whom no carnage can elevate to heroism. Napoleon, that man of iron and of blood, repented, trembled, wept, when he remembered that he had needlessly anticipated the attack of an outpost, and thus shortened by a day the lives of a few soldiers, to gratify the curiosity of a woman with the spectacle of a battle. But what compunctions have visited our rulers, for the blood of those who fell in the ranks in the valley of the Rio Grande, at the storming of Monterey, at Buena Vista, at Cerro Gordo, and in those sanguinary conflicts under the walls of Mexico; for the unoffending and unresisting women and children, who were slaughtered in the bombardment of Vera Cruz, or who have fallen victims to the infuriated passions of an undisciplined, ma-

rauding, soldiery; for the thousands whom the pestilence of the camp has silently swept into the grave; for the sorrow and desolation of bereavement, whose tokens are so conspicuous even in the highways of this metropolis?

But while discussing the moral considerations connected with this question, it is fit that we should inquire into the character of the original *causa causarum* of the war, and all its attendant crimes and miseries, the measure of which they are, as I have already said, legitimate, if not necessary consequences, and of the means by which that great wrong was effected.

I shall not take upon myself to maintain that the bare act of annexation, considered apart from its motives and its means, was clearly a just and sufficient ground for a declaration of war against us by Mexico. The determination of this question would involve an inquiry into the relations between that republic and her revolted province, which is not practicable, until the secret history of the Texan revolution shall be better understood than it is likely to be by this generation. Texas may be said to have established an actual independence, and it is possible, though never yet proved, that her revolt was justified by the misgovernment of Mexico, or the inability of that unhappy State to afford a protective government at all. But whatever may have been the right of the question between the metropolis and her colony, it is plain that *our* conduct must be judged by the motives which guided us, and the instrumentalities to which we resorted.

The avowed motives of the annexation of Texas were to prevent the abolition of slavery in that country, and to secure additional territory for the expansion and growth of the system. It was argued that the accomplishment of these objects was indispensable to the permanence and stability of the institution of slavery; that they were necessary for the maintenance of a local right, recognised and guarantied by the Constitution, and that therefore the General Government was in good faith bound to aid in effecting them. There were also some timid suggestions concerning the value of Texas as a future market for northern produce and manufactures; some puerile apprehensions of the establishment of British domination in that republic; some idle babble about the importance of that territory to the military defence of the Union; some philanthropic humbug in regard to the influence of annexation in hastening the final extinction of slavery; but I pass these over, because, although they might impose on those weak brethren, who were simple enough to be deluded by the Kane letter into the belief that Mr. Polk was friendly to the protective policy and the tariff of 1842, yet it is quite notorious that none of them influenced one vote in the American Congress. The twenty-eighth Congress was called upon to decide the naked, undisguised problem, whether annexation should be consummated as "a Southern question, a question of slavery," whether the General Government, whose authority to restrict slavery is denied, should be invoked to put forth its power to maintain and defend it.

Up to this time it had been strenuously insisted by the advocates of Southern rights that the Federal Government had absolutely no jurisdiction of any matter pertaining to the institution of slavery, except the right of recaption of fugitive slaves in the free States, in opposition to the views of the abolitionists, who contended that the influence of the Government ought to be exerted to bring about the ultimate abrogation of the system. But here, in their overheated zeal, the partizans of annexation conceded the *principle* to their opponents; and the abolitionists have now the example and the authority of their ablest antagonists for appealing to the General Government for legislative action upon a matter hitherto alleged to lie exclusively within the jurisdiction of the several States. But my colleague, (Mr. COLLAMER,) has lately so fully and clearly elucidated this point, that it would be quite idle for me to enlarge upon the subject.

I have neither time nor desire to enter, at present, into any discussion of the moral character of slavery itself, as a christian or an unchristian institution. I have already, on other occasions, expressed myself explicitly enough on that topic, and my opinions are still unchanged, in spite of the theological argument, the proof from Holy Writ, which I have heard advanced on this floor, and with which, as certain indications lead me to conclude, we are again to be favored.

But whatever may be the character of that system, whatever its influence for good or evil, it is of great moment to the cause of historical truth that it should never be forgotten—that the true motive which dictated the action of all, I repeat it, of *all* official persons, who aided in the annexation of Texas, was to extend, strengthen, and perpetuate the tottering institution of domestic slavery.

But wrong as I hold the motive to have been, I fear that, if the whole truth were revealed, we should find more of crime in the means and appliances through which that act was accomplished, than in the end itself. He who would write the blackest page in American history must ferret out the secret and long continued intrigues, by which the Texan Revolution was fomented; uncover the hollow duplicity with which our neutral relations with Mexico were violated; disclose the Machiavellian diplomacy by which opposite and inconsistent arguments were made to influence different sections of this country, and the arts whereby annexation was made the policy of the Democratic party, in spite of the deliberate and solemnly expressed convictions of the entire North; depict how the hopes of Texan stock-jobbers fell and rose as this or that Northern Democratic member exhibited tokens of rebellion, or meekly gave in his adhesion to the slavish policy of his party; expose the means by which certain sudden and notorious changes of opinion in these legislative halls were produced; explain how that contemptible faction, that so long swung here like a pendulum, between the law of conscience and the dictate of party, alternately betraying each, was at length fixed; and, in fine, tell what votes were extorted by craven fear, and what purchased by damnable corruption.

I think myself bound in candor to admit that, however selfish may have been the policy of the South in the matter of annexation, the conduct of the most unscrupulous Southern advocates of that untoward measure is infinitely more excusable than that of their Northern allies, who, by the stand they have taken on the Wilmot Proviso, have pronounced upon themselves judgment of irrevocable condemnation. The whole Southern people entertained a fixed opinion, mistaken I think, but unquestionably sincere, that the best interests of the South imperiously *demanded* annexation; and those brave, good men from the slaveholding States, who stood by their *whole* country in that dark hour, did verily believe that, in obeying the voice of conscience, they were making a heroic sacrifice of a local interest to the stronger claims of the general good. The Northern supporters of annexation have placed upon record a solemn avowal, which time will not expunge, that *they* had falsely betrayed the rights and interests of those who sent them hither. The Wilmot Proviso, as it is called after its putative father, or the Brinkerhoff Proviso, as perhaps it should be styled, (for I leave those gentlemen to settle the question of paternity between themselves,) coming as it did from a knot of politicians, whose whole political action furnishes most conclusive proof of their insincerity, is the boldest experiment ever tried upon the credulity of the American people; and now that it has failed to delude those upon whom it was intended to impose, that it has effected neither of the two objects it was designed to accomplish, I have no hesitation in predicting, that many of those who were most zealous for its adoption will be the first to listen to temptation from high places, and to abandon the principle it embodies. Sir, I embrace not all in this sweeping condemnation. Some there were who were untainted with the original sin of annexation, some whose

moral courage had not been stern enough to resist the menaces of party and the blandishments of power, and who, now repentant, took, too late, this only method of testifying their unavailing regret for that most deplorable and fatal error. But for the mass of those who both promoted annexation and sustained the Wilmot Proviso, I have no such charity. With these, two considerations were operative. Some hoped to propitiate a local feeling at home; with others, the whole affair was but an ill-concealed stratagem to dispose of an obnoxious Western candidate for the Presidency, by compelling him to commit himself on this ticklish question by his vote in the Senate, while his great rival was lying perdu at the North, in a position which relieved him from the necessity of taking either horn of the dilemma. That Western gentleman has taken ground against the Proviso; but in spite of this, if he should chance to be selected as the Democratic candidate for the Executive chair, I will confess that I know little of the Democracy, if his noisiest adherents are not found among the very men who dug that pit to entrap him. The Proviso, it will be remembered, was adopted in the House of Representatives, as an amendment to the "three million bill," on the 15th of February, 1847, by a majority of *nine*. On the 3d of March, 1847, the Administration defeated the amendment by a majority of *five*. Sir, they could just as easily have made that majority *fifty*. Some solitary Democratic Abdiel, indeed, might have been found faithful enough, "with flame of zeal severe," to maintain

"Against revolted multitudes the cause
Of Truth."

But I am speaking what every member of the 28th Congress knows, when I say that the Northern Democrats generally were prepared to abandon the Proviso, at once and altogether, as soon as it was ascertained that it would be defeated in the Senate. But elections were approaching in New Hampshire and Connecticut, there were vacancies in the Congressional delegation from Maine to be filled, and it was thought not safe to shock the people of those States by too sudden a dereliction from a principle which had just been proclaimed with such a fanfaronnade of Democratic tin trumpets. The Administration preferred the risk of the moral effect in strengthening the abolition cause to the probable loss of those three States, and therefore issued a *dispensation* to the faithful of the North, graciously permitting them, for this once, to adhere to the abhorred Proviso.

I shall not characterize this relaxation of party discipline as a crime; but, considering the end designed to be effected, it was what the great French intriguer said was worse—it was a blunder. The people of the North, even the Democracy, have taken their leaders at their word, pledged themselves irrevocably to the great characteristic feature of the ordinance of 1787, and though deserted by their faithless guides, will firmly maintain the new position they have assumed.

Mr. Chairman, I do not know the present state of public opinion at the South on this matter of Texan annexation; but, now that Texas has proved to be not quite the El Dorado it was fabled, that it has been the means of involving us in an unjust predatory war, exciting a lust for territorial aggrandizement which threatens to become the fatal spring of every crime and every curse that have disgraced the most rapacious States of the old world, of kindling anew the flames of civil discord, and alienating from each other the members of this fair confederacy, I am much mistaken if, after all this, some of the clear-headed and patriotic sons of the South do not begin to entertain doubts of the wisdom, the expediency, the justice of that measure, if there are not even some who would be content to spare the baleful effulgence of that "lone star," if we could thereby secure quiet within our own borders, and an honorable peace with the republic of Mexico.

The only remaining lawful motive for the further prosecution of this war is to obtain a just and honorable peace; for revenge, if so base a passion could be an adequate inducement for a great nation to engage in war with a puny and imbecile people, has long since been satisfied. But what terms of peace would be honorable and just? No peace can be honorable to us, which is not at the same time honorable to Mexico. It can never be honorable to the stronger to extort by force that which it is dishonorable to the weaker to yield. What, then, are the obligations of Mexico to us? Does she owe us any thing for exciting an insurrection in her most important colony, and giving "aid and comfort" to her revolted subjects? Any thing for appropriating to ourselves a territory once indisputably hers, and to which she had never sold or surrendered her claim? Any thing for invading and ravaging with fire and sword, upon a baseless pretence of title, a disputed region, of which she was, and from the first hour of her national existence had been, in quiet and undisturbed possession? Any thing for the slaughter of thousands of her people, the storming of Monterey, the inglorious rout of Buena Vista, the reduction of her strongest fortress, the military occupation of her fairest provinces, the conquest of her proud capital, and the destruction of the venerable memorials of her ancient civilization, the humiliation, disgrace, and dissolution of her government? What claim have we but the recognition and payment of her acknowledged liabilities to private American citizens; and who doubts that she is now ready again to recognise them, and to pay them whenever she has the means? But, on the other hand, has it not been over and over again admitted by this Government that Mexico ought to receive an indemnity for the loss of Texas? Have not distinct intimations been given that the United States would make her a reasonable pecuniary allowance in any arrangement by which she should cede to us her rights to her revolted province? Who shall estimate the amount of this compensation? Are we to be judges in our own cause, and to determine that, upon the whole, the balance is upon our side? Gentlemen who repudiate acquisition of territory by conquest, and who have heretofore admitted that we owed Mexico a compensation for the relinquishment of her rights to Texas, still insist that we must coerce the cession of California and other provinces by way of indemnity for the claims of our citizens, and this upon the avowed ground that a balance may be due us which Mexico can pay in no other way. The claims of our citizens are supposed to amount to from three to seven millions. If Mexico was entitled to an indemnity for the loss of Texas, would any man estimate the value of her claim at less than seven millions? And had she no such claim, can it be pretended that California, and all the vast territory between that province and Texas, if worth any thing, are worth no more than this? There is, then, no just, no honorable ground for prosecuting this war as a means of coercing an indemnity to our citizens, or of the acquisition of territory; and any compulsory treaty, by which Mexico shall yield us that which she does not owe, will be humiliating to her and doubly shameful to us.

But such a peace as the Administration hopes now to conquer, and now to buy, will be attended with as little of profit as of honor. What has this nation to gain by further extension of territory? The prosperity of a people consists in the aggregate individual prosperity of its citizens, and is not measured by the number of its armies or its fleets, the extent of its territorial jurisdiction, or the splendor of its government. We are apt to forget that a splendid government is not one of the objects of our institutions, and to confound the power of rulers with the prosperity of their subjects; but who doubts that the citizens of the little republic of San Marino, and of the duchy of Tuscany, are as happy and as prosperous as if they were annexed to the kingdom of Sardinia, or even enjoyed the paternal discipline of the gentle Metternich? Who has forgotten

that Norway, though one of the feeblest powers, is yet the freest state of continental Europe?

The increase of the power of a government by territorial aggrandizement is not attended with a corresponding increase of the power of the people to resist its encroachments upon the liberties of the citizen. With enlargement of territory comes increase of standing armies, of navies, and, especially, of that which is more dangerous to liberty than either, of Executive patronage. All these instruments of power are concentrated; the means of resistance scattered and dispersed. What, in small republics, is the safeguard of their liberties—the distribution of power through a multitude of jurisdictions and departments—becomes in greater commonwealths an engine for their overthrow, whenever increased and widely diffused patronage enables the Executive to control those jurisdictions.

The States have neither fleets nor armies, and though the ordinary militia of a single one of them might set at defiance the whole military force which it has hitherto been our policy to maintain, yet it does not follow that the increased armies and navies which our contemplated expansion will oblige us to keep on foot may not enable an ambitious President to establish a military despotism; and, as in ancient Rome, the soldiery raised to protect the frontier may supersede your electoral colleges, and impose upon you a Dictator, who shall supersede your Constitution and your laws. Even now tokens of evil augury may be discerned. The legions of Pennsylvania have cast their suffrages in Mexico. The ballot-box has become a part of the furniture of the camp, and the commander, whom military law invests with the power of life and death, issues his orders for the “free” election of the civil magistracy of a State, to whose jurisdiction neither he nor his troops are longer amenable.

When the soil of an independent country is sufficiently wide, and its climate sufficiently genial, to supply its population with the cardinal necessities of human life, and reasonable means of exchange with foreign lands—when its physical power is adequate to its defence against invasion and aggression, and when its rights to an equal position among civilized communities are recognised, it possesses all the necessary elements of true prosperity, and nothing is gained by further increase of power or extension of territory. This point we reached long since. Indeed, our original limits fulfilled all the necessary conditions of national prosperity, and I much doubt whether we should not at this moment have occupied a higher place among the nations of the earth than we now enjoy, if we had been content with the inheritance our wiser fathers devised to us. We had a territory, such, in position and configuration, that it was wholly invulnerable from without, and at the same time so situated as to give us the most enviable facilities for universal commerce, as well as for maritime power; we enjoyed a boundless variety of soil, climate, and natural productions; an extent of surface adequate to the sustenance of a larger population than any kingdom of Europe, and yielding the most abundant materials for industrial elaboration, the most plentiful means of commercial exchange. What more than this has earth to offer to social man? I shall not dispute the wisdom of the acquisition of Florida and eastern Louisiana. The latter seemed necessary, as a means of providing an outlet for the products of the teeming West, especially in the day when canals and railroads had not yet furnished a better means of transport to the ocean than that famous river, which is “frozen for three months in the year, and dry the remaining nine;” or even than that “inland sea,” whose snags and sawyers are more formidable to navigators than the Libyan Syrtes, or the rock and whirlpool of old Scylla and Charybdis; but I am not able to see wherein the lot of any American has been, or is likely to be, improved by further expansion. I cannot conceive that the value of plantations in the old Southern States will be increased, by throwing into mar-

ket the cotton and sugar lands of Texas; that the price of Genessee flour will be raised by competition with the vast grain-growing region between the Mississippi and the Rocky mountain desert; or that the commerce of New York, and Philadelphia, and Baltimore, and Charleston, will profit by the transfer of the China trade to the Bay of San Francisco, or the mouth of the Columbia. There is at least no present necessity of extension for the accommodation of our growing population, or for any purpose of national trade or national defence; and it would, therefore, be worse than idle to wage a useless and a guilty war, to conquer for posterity a territory which it will be quite able to secure for itself by honest means, whenever it may require it.

I am sceptical in regard to the exact truth of the glowing descriptions we have heard and read of the physical advantages of Oregon and California. But if they, indeed, are what they are represented to be, they well may, and no doubt will, one day form a separate confederacy. They are rapidly filling up with American emigrants, and they will soon be strong enough to maintain themselves as an independent people. They will sympathize with our institutions, and adopt our form of government, but they can never have a common interest with us, and the mutual good of all parties will demand that all political bonds between them and us should be severed. Why, then, persevere in this unprofitable struggle, to acquire what cannot long be ours to enjoy?

But what evidence is there that the possession of New Mexico, or California, however permanent, can be attended with any solid advantages to the people of this country? They are separated from us by sterile and arid deserts, or chains of lofty and almost impassable mountains. They yield no natural products of commercial value which our own soil does not abundantly supply. They are described by the best informed explorers as being, in the main, unsuited to agriculture, unable to sustain a dense population, adapted only to the lowest form of semi-civilized life—the pastoral state. And, above all, they are inhabited by a mixed population, of habits, opinions, and characters incapable of sympathy or assimilation with our own; a race, whom the experience of an entire generation has proved to be unfitted for self-government, and unprepared to appreciate, sustain, or enjoy, free institutions.

But how is the war to be carried on? Every financial scheme hitherto proposed is based on the assumption, that the North will be generous enough, or stupid enough, to bear the sole pecuniary burden of a war, commenced and prosecuted with a single eye to the interests of, I will not say the people, but of certain political aspirants of the South. The annexation of Texas, a strictly Southern measure, and the initiatory step towards this war, by giving the anti-tariff party a majority in the Senate, enabled those aspirants to deprive the industry of the North of the protection to which it was justly entitled, and which it had enjoyed, from the organization of the Government to that evil hour when the tariff of 1846 was adopted; and these same aspirants, and their followers, now propose to tax *our* pockets, to pay for all the consequences of that disastrous act. The Secretary of the Treasury recommends a duty on tea and coffee; other prominent Democrats have advised the imposition of duties on the free list, embracing many articles chiefly consumed at the North; and others, again, stern republican haters, no doubt, of accumulated wealth, and luxury, and superfluity, disinterestedly propose a tax on bank stock, and all articles of gold and silver. Disguise it as you will, it is plain that all these schemes are both calculated and designed to shift the whole pecuniary burden of the war upon Northern shoulders. How much tea and coffee are consumed by the three or four millions of Southern slaves? What is the value of the jewelry that decks their persons, and the forks, and spoons, and goblets of plate that adorn their tables? How many of them consult gold and silver watches, to know their hours of labor, refreshment, and repose? The last Democratic

House of Representatives resolved, on the motion of a Southern gentleman, "that the people of the United States are too patriotic to refuse any necessary tax in time of war." How happens it that no Southern Democratic financier has ever been "patriotic" enough to move a tax for the support of this war, embracing a certain description of property possessed only by the South—"persons," namely, "held in slavery, or involuntary servitude?" And when that persecuted philanthropist, who has "achieved greatness" by coupling his name with the far-famed proviso, moved a tax, apportioned according to the Constitution, on the same basis as congressional representation, with what transports of jubilant "patriotism" did the "sweet South" hail the suggestion! Sir, the Government organ very plainly intimated to him, that *his* "patriotism" was of the sort so energetically anathematized by Dr. Johnson.

Mr. Chairman, I warn gentlemen that none of these shallow devices to tax one portion of this Confederacy for the benefit of another will succeed; and those who desire to protract the war must, in the end, be content to bear their share, at least, of its burdens. It has been affirmed that no resort to direct taxation will be necessary. I am not of that opinion. We shall not know the cost of the war so long as this Administration has it in its power to conceal it from the people; but we know enough of it to be certain that it cannot be carried on without an expenditure vastly greater than any previous conflict has occasioned. Mexico has thrice the population of this Confederacy at the outbreak of the American Revolution—a population, though inferior to that of the colonies in the qualities of the soldier, yet not divided in opinion respecting the justice of their cause, nor half paralyzed by superstitious doubts upon the lawfulness of rebellion, but united as one man in defending their soil against the incursions of a foe alien in blood, and strangers in language and religion. If Great Britain, after eight years of warfare, the expenditure of hundreds of millions of money, and the loss of many thousands of lives, was willing to withdraw from the struggle with her former colonies, at the sacrifice of every point for which she contended, at what cost of money, with what loss of life, and after how long a war, may we hope to extort from Mexico a peace which shall yield to us all that we choose to ask, and all she has to give?

I have given my reasons for thinking that no increase of our present territory is desirable, and I believe it is now possible, by a union of the good men of all parties, to arrest the evils which must ensue from any further successful attempts at sectional aggrandizement. Let us unite in a solemn legislative declaration that this war shall not be prosecuted with a view to the dismemberment of Mexico. Let us refuse all supplies to armies equipped for conquest, and proclaim to our sister Republic that we are now ready to accept precisely the terms we ought to have offered before we commenced this unhappy war. I think myself entirely safe in saying, that if the honest convictions of a majority of both Houses do not *compel* them to sanction, by their votes, propositions like these, the world will be justified in believing that, with American legislators, the voice of patriotism is less heeded than the dictates of party.

There is another consideration, which ought to have weight with honest men of all parties, with the people of every section of the American Union: it is the certainty that any extension of our territory in a southwestwardly direction involves the renewed agitation, and in a far more fearful shape, of the Missouri controversy. Whenever a treaty shall be presented to the Senate, embracing the cession of Mexican territory, the question will be directly presented. Southern gentlemen affirm that no treaty, attended, directly or indirectly, with a prohibition of slavery south of 36° 30', can be ratified. We of the North demand that none shall be, and are firmly persuaded that none can be, ratified without. Why, then, conquer or buy provinces which will be but an apple of discord, to be quarrelled over, but not enjoyed?

I admired the firmness which some Southern gentlemen, of both parties, displayed during the pendency of the Oregon question, in spite of popular clamor and the denunciations of a venal press. They saved this country from a war, which the folly of the Administration seemed to have rendered inevitable, and compelled the settlement of a difficult and long-pending controversy upon terms of equitable adjustment, which the good sense of the nation has fully approved. It remains for them to prove, what I have hitherto believed, and still trust, that their conduct on that occasion was dictated by no jealousy of Northern aggrandisement, to exercise *now* the magnanimity they then professed, and to refute the charge that they have constrained the Administration to truckle to omnipotent Britain, and aided it to trample on impotent Mexico.

There is, so far as I know, no particular anxiety at the North to extend our boundaries in a northwardly direction, but such a feeling will inevitably be excited by further acquisitions in the opposite quarter, and it is well to understand that a confederacy of States, a Government independent of Great Britain, and even annexation to the United States, have all come to be debateable questions in Canada itself. I do not refer to any contemplated insurrection or violent revolution; but it is certain that an entire though peaceful change in the administration of those colonies, by which their government shall become, in a great measure, assimilated to our own, and at no distant day allied with, if not merged in it, is both desired and expected by a large proportion of those British subjects in the provinces, who, a very few years since, detested nothing more thoroughly than American institutions.

The vote on the supply bill of May, 1846, by which the existence of the war with Mexico was recognised, has been much insisted on as a committal of those who voted for the bill to the support of all measures looking to the prosecution of the war. I do not esteem this argument a very ingenuous one, on the part of those who advance it. It is notorious that the bill, as originally reported, contained no declaration of war, or recognition of the war as existing; that the false and offensive preamble embracing that declaration was offered as an amendment, after the time for debate had been limited to two hours, during which no Whig was allowed to obtain the floor; that the amendment was opposed by almost every Whig member of the House; that several amendments, simply providing the necessary supplies, were rejected, and that, after the adoption of the preamble, the bill was immediately passed under the previous question. At that time nothing was known of Taylor's victories. The army was thought, by military men in Washington, to be in an eminently critical position; and it was believed, that though it might sustain itself for a few weeks, yet, unless relieved, it must inevitably soon be cut off by the Mexican forces. The consequences of a defeat would have been, in a high degree, disastrous. We should have lost our most reliable troops. A victory by the Mexicans would have stimulated them to desperate efforts to follow up the advantages they had gained. Foreign sympathies would have been enlisted in their favor, and foreign adventurers, by sea and land, would have flocked to their standard. These evils, it was hoped, might be averted, by sending immediate succor to our gallant troops, whom the temerity of the Administration had exposed to imminent hazard, and those opposed to the war were apparently left to choose between the sacrifice of three thousand brave men and the support of a bill intended to save them, though prefaced by a preamble as false as the provocation of the war was unjustifiable. The fact that war existed was, indeed, unquestionable, and the defence of our country and its troops was clearly a duty. Should we be deterred from the performance of this duty because a majority of this House chose to assert, in spite of our protestations to the contrary, that the war had been begun by the "act of Mexico?" We thought not. It was plain that a snare was laid for us. The authors of the war desired to compel us to

sanction it as just, or to expose us to popular indignation for refusing supplies believed to be necessary to save the army from destruction. We took what seemed to be the only means of foiling this unworthy stratagem. We voted against the amendment, but, when that was forced upon us, we sustained the bill.

Perhaps, after all, this was an error. Perhaps we ought to have better known the valor of our troops, and the skill of their commanders, and to have hoped from these a more favorable result than we could dare to expect from the justice of our cause. But if this were so, if we erred in voting supplies which then seemed indispensable for the salvation of our army, and which were asked for no other purpose, we should be still more inexcusable for voting additional means now, when no such necessity exists, and when the iniquitous purpose of dismemberment, plunder, and conquest is proclaimed, with a shameless profligacy of avowal, and an open contempt of law, human and divine, of which the civilized world has seen no example since the promulgation of the Christian dispensation. Sir, I lack words to express my abhorrence of the heaven-daring insolence with which maxims, that thieves and robbers would blush to own, have been appealed to by influential American statesmen as the rules by which the foreign policy of this great nation is to be determined. Human language has yet no name for that new crime, whereby a mighty and highly cultivated people is to put itself without the pale of civilization, and declare itself the enemy of law, and right, and humanity; history records no instance of such a heinous and impudent mockery of every sanction that man reverences and GOD has proclaimed.

Besides these general reasons against furnishing supplies for the prosecution of the war, there are other sufficient grounds for refusing to comply with the demand of the President for additional forces. The regular regiments already organized are very far from full in rank and file. These the President has power to fill up by enlistment, and there is little probability that this can be accomplished within the term of another twelvemonth. Why, then, organize new regiments while the existing ones are, and are destined to remain, mere skeletons? The purpose is plain. The regiments are to be raised, or rather officered, for no other end or aim but to increase the patronage of the Executive, to enable it to reward hungry partisans, or purchase new ones, by a prodigal distribution of rank and emoluments. How will these regiments be officered? Will the higher commands be tendered to gentlemen of military education and experience? Will faithful service in Florida, or in this Mexican war, be rewarded by fair promotion? He that would know from what class these officers will be taken needs but consult the records of the War Office for the last two years, and look at the hordes of cormorants that flock hither from the four quarters of the Union, at every rumored augmentation of the army, and are even now trooping at the heels of men in authority, and gaping for pay and rations. I know there are among the applicants brave, honorable, intelligent men, men who would do credit to any service, any profession. But what are the mass of these valorous Bobadils? Idle debauched loafers, who, feeling no vocation for labor, and having experimentally proved their incapacity to do aught better, conceive themselves to be gifted with "military genius," and charged with a mission to destroy and lay waste what creative nature and human industry have produced; political jack-puddings, whose success in party stratagem has inspired them with lofty notions of their own abilities in military strategy; unkempt, unshaven coxcombs, microscopic martialists, truculent Tom Thumbs, verdant overgrown juvenals, burly thrasonic Anakim, with an air that reminds one of the giant's chant in the fable—

Fee, faw, fum!
I smell the blood of a Mexican!
Dead or alive, I will have some!

Truly, Mr. Chairman, I can say, with the poor young prince—

My eyes are out,
Even with the fierce looks of these bloody men.

Of such cheap stuff as this are chiefly made the self-puffed "citizen-soldier," pseudo-heroes of this Mexican war, whom blinded party zeal permits to usurp rank and honors denied to the wiser and better men, whose courage and skill, and heroic self-devotion, have enabled the adventurers who have supplanted them to reap a transient harvest of false glory, that as ill becomes the wearers as borrowed plumes the jackdaw. Brute courage, indeed, these doughty paladins may have; I see no reason why they should not. Risking themselves they risk little, and valuing their own lives at nothing, they estimate them at just what they are worth.

I have touched upon a point to which the attention of the American public has been by no means as strongly drawn as its importance demands. I refer to the injustice with which the officers of the regular army have been treated. Not only have they been denied the promotion to which experience and faithful service had entitled them, but it has been the studied effort of the Administration, and the party that sustains it, to deprive them of the credit which justly belongs to them for the brilliant successes that have crowned our military operations in Mexico, by ascribing to the mere animal courage of the volunteers and new raised regiments, results which were in a far greater degree due to the skill and intelligence of the educated gentlemen of the regular army, by whom the most important movements were directed or advised. I am not disposed to question the patriotism or the valor of the volunteers. The American people have sufficiently exhibited these qualities on other and less equivocal fields, and I have no doubt they will again be displayed in still more heroic forms, whenever a higher motive and a worthier cause shall demand their exercise.

But I fear the noble sentiment of patriotism has been too much alloyed by other impulses besides a sense of duty to our country. What was there, in fact, to call forth any special enthusiasm of patriotic feeling? How had our country's honor been tarnished, save by the acts of her own rulers? What American hearth had been threatened with desolation, what fields menaced with Mexican invasion? So far as the rescue of our gallant army from the critical position in which it had been placed, not, as I believe, by any error of judgment in the brave and wise man who led it, but by the express, though unconstitutional order of the Cabinet; so far as the protection of the country against the serious evils which, both as immediate and indirect consequences, would have resulted from the sacrifice of that army; so far as the conduct of the volunteers has been prompted by such considerations, it has been eminently praiseworthy. But beyond this I fear there is little that a Christian or a moralist can approve, little that a wise statesman would desire to cherish. If you subtract from the impulses of those who have so eagerly rushed to the field the hope of military fame, and perhaps of political advancement as its consequence, the passion for the romance of danger, the love of daring enterprise, and the expectation of wild adventure in those strange and distant climes, which the historians of the infernal exploits of Cortez have made classic ground, you will, in too many instances, have little left but that savage thirst of blood, which eighteen centuries of Christian teachings have not yet been able to eradicate from the human breast.

But creditable as are our recent victories to the bravery of our troops, they are far more important to our national safety and renown, as furnishing to the world evidence that the highest order of strategical talent exists among us, and that our system of military education is able to produce as accomplished a corps of officers as the best regulated European professional schools.

The disposition to withhold from the regular officers the praise and the rewards to which they are justly entitled is not an accident, not a mere matter of personal feeling with the members of the present Cabinet, but it is one among the many evidences of a design, which has been long entertained by a certain party, to *demoralize* the army, break down its *esprit de corps*, abolish the military academy, and convert the military establishment into an engine of political corruption. The army, as formerly organized, is too conservative in its character and influence to suit the views of the destructive school. Education, subordination, discipline, permanent tenure of office, are formidable obstacles to the "progress" of modern Democracy; and among other "reforms," which will signalize the triumph of radicalism, will be the suppression of the school at West Point, rotation in office in the military service, and the establishment of the principle that political subserviency is the only route to military preferment. The introduction of similar innovations into the navy is somewhat more difficult, but it is not impracticable even there; and in case a European war should require an increase of our marine, the oldest commodore may very probably find himself superseded by a New York pilot, or an amateur captain of a private yacht.

I know as little of the grounds on which the Administration has thought proper to take away one-half the effective strength of the army in Mexico, by recalling its accomplished commander, as I do of those on which the Executive chose to give double strength and vigor to the Mexican forces by restoring to them their ablest general; and therefore, however strong my impressions, I will not pronounce judgment beforehand on the propriety of that act. This much, however, I may safely say, that a Cabinet, which has not had the generosity to bestow upon General Scott a single personal compliment for the greatest military achievement of this generation, a single word of praise on the unrivalled genius displayed in the great combinations which alone rendered the prowess of our troops available, and which have commanded the unbounded admiration of the ablest living captains, exhibits a spirit of illiberality towards a most eminent and deserving fellow-citizen, which well accords with the injustice of its policy towards Mexico.





100-1
N. MANCHESTER,
INDIANA 46062



